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News Release

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SUNUNU HELPS SENIORS LIVE MORE SAFE AND INDEPENDENT LIVES Introduces bipartisan “Medicare Vision Rehabilitation Services Act of 2003”

WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senator John Sununu (R-NH) recently introduced the “Medicare Vision Rehabilitation Services Act of 2003” – bipartisan legislation that reforms Medicare coverage to help millions of visually impaired seniors lead more safe and independent lives.

“Approximately 6.6 million seniors in New Hampshire and across the country have some degree of vision impairment, despite the use of glasses or contact lenses, and more than 700,000 seniors are legally blind,” said Sununu. “This legislation will help them to lead more safe and independent lives by ensuring Medicare reimbursement for vision rehabilitation services, and by adding vision rehabilitation professionals to the Medicare program for the very first time.”

“By providing at-home assistance and training on spatial orientation and mobility, vision rehabilitation specialists can help seniors prevent debilitating injuries from burns and falls. At the same time, specialists can encourage visually impaired seniors to practice healthy behaviors in diet, exercise, and disease management, thereby reducing health care and dependency costs,” Sununu continued. “Without passage of this legislation, there is no guarantee that beneficiaries will be able to receive vision rehabilitation or that such services will be reimbursable under Medicare.”

George F. Theriault, President and CEO for the New Hampshire Association for the Blind, said, “Passage of this bill will mean that senior citizens who are blind and visually impaired, and those just losing sight will have much greater access to needed services. Receiving these essential vision rehabilitation services earlier will improve their chances of maintaining or regaining independence – allowing them to safely live longer in their own homes and with their families.”

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Sununu introduced the “Medicare Vision Rehabilitation Services Act of 2003” with Senator John Kerry (D-MA) on May 21, 2003. The measure has been endorsed by several organizations for the blind and visually impaired including:

- New Hampshire Association for the Blind
- New England College of Optometry
- New England Eye Institute
- American Academy of Ophthalmology
- American Optometric Association
- American Council for the Blind
- The Glaucoma Foundation
- National Council on Aging